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POSITIVE MESONS PRODUCED BY THE 184-INCH BERKELEY CYCLOTRON

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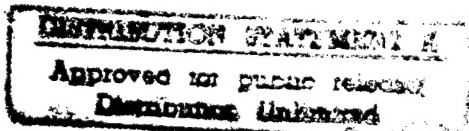
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POSITIVE MESONS PRODUCED BY THE 184-INCH BERKELEY CYCLOTRON

By John Burfening, Eugene Gardner, and C.M.G. Lattes

ABSTRACT

Positive mesons produced by 380 Mev alpha-particles in the 184-inch Berkeley cyclotron have been detected by means of photographic plates. The experimental arrangement is similar to that used for detecting negative mesons except that the plates are placed in a position to receive positive instead of negative particles from the target. Heavy positive mesons are observed to decay into secondary mesons in the manner described by Lattes, Occhialini and Powell. Relative numbers of positive and negative mesons coming from a target are found by placing plates symmetrically on opposite sides of the target. Preliminary results indicate that for a 1/16 inch carbon target there are about one fourth as many heavy positive mesons as heavy negative ones for meson energies of 2-3 Mev in the laboratory system.

INTRODUCTION

The mesons first observed at the 184-inch Berkeley cyclotron² were known to be negatively charged, since the photographic plates used for detecting them were placed in a position to receive negative but not positive particles from the target. We have now detected positive mesons by placing plates in a position to receive positively charged particles from the target. As with the exposures to negative mesons, the target was bombarded with the circulating beam of 380 Mev alpha particles. Most of our work has been done with a carbon target 1/16 inch thick. The photographic plates which we have found to be most suitable for detecting positive mesons are Ilford C.2 and C.3, and Eastman NTB, each of emulsion thickness of about 100 microns.

DESCRIPTION OF APPARATUS

Two methods of making exposures to positive mesons have produced plates suitable for study. The first method makes use of positive mesons which follow trajectories like the one illustrated in Figure 1. Plates are placed below the circulating beam, as shown in Figure 2. Mesons are received which leave the target moving at a small angle downward from the beam direction. Plates to receive negative mesons of about the same energy and angular range may be placed on the opposite side of the target as shown in Figure 2. Shielding is provided on the side from which the beam comes in order to prevent scattered beam particles from reaching the plates. For mesons which strike the plate at right angles to the edge, the energy range is about 2 to 5 Mev in the laboratory system. For meson trajectories at other angles the energy at a given point on the plate is larger, so that the energy range of the mesons counted on the plates is not very well defined.

In a second method of detecting positive mesons, the photographic plates are placed in a position to receive mesons which leave the target in a direction opposite to the beam direction. The arrangement is shown in Figure 3. Plates exposed in this way have tracks of negative mesons along one edge, and tracks of positive mesons along the opposite edge. In this method, as in the preceding one, the energy range of the mesons received by the plates is not well defined.

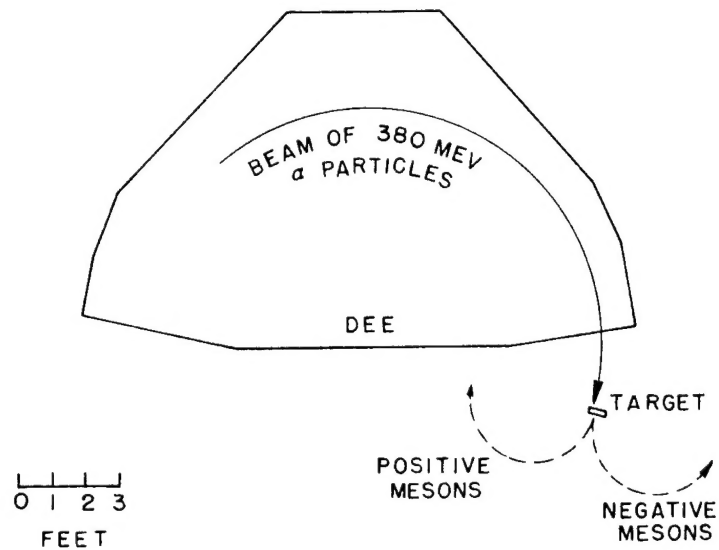


Figure 1. Sketch of cyclotron showing direction in which positive and negative mesons are deflected by the magnetic field.

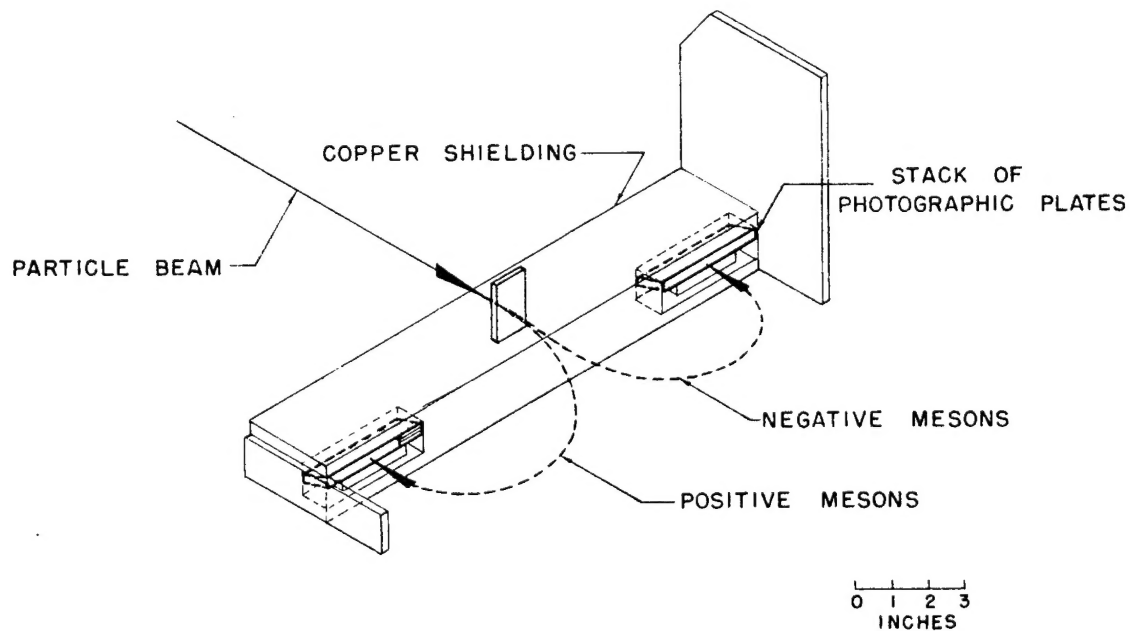


Figure 2. Apparatus used for placing photographic plates below the circulating beam for exposure to positive mesons.

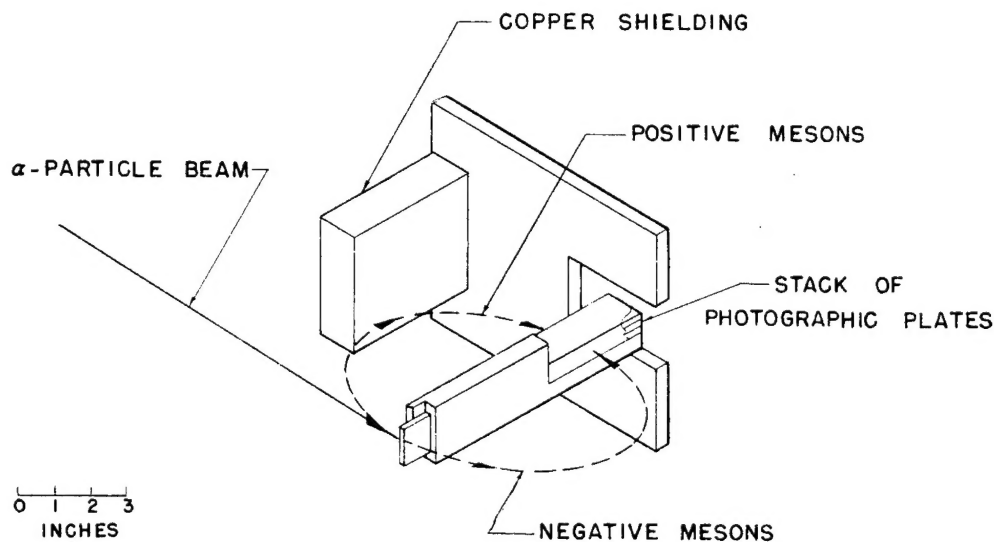


Figure 3. Apparatus used for placing photographic plates in a position to receive positive mesons which leave the target in a direction opposite to the beam direction.

In addition to the meson tracks found on the plates there is a "background" of tracks due to protons and alpha particles. Some of the background tracks are attributed to stars and recoils produced by neutrons and some to low-energy protons and alpha particles from the target. Neither of the methods for making exposures to positive mesons gives as high a ratio of meson tracks to background tracks as that obtained in exposures to negative mesons.¹

DESCRIPTION OF THE POSITIVE MESON TRACKS

The appearance of the positive meson tracks under the microscope is similar to that of negative meson tracks:¹ they have a characteristic grain density change along the track and a characteristic wandering associated with small-angle scattering. For mesons which come from the target a measurement of the mass can be obtained by measuring the bending in the magnetic field of the cyclotron and the range in the emulsion. The radius of the curvature of the trajectory is calculated from the position on the plate at which the track is found and the angle which the track makes with the edge of the plate. The mass determination has not yet been made with any precision; however, preliminary measurements indicate that there are two groups of mesons having masses of about 300 and 200 electron masses respectively. It is presumed that they are the same as the π and μ mesons described by Lattes, Occhialini, and Powell.³ The total number of light and heavy mesons observed so far is about 200.

Neither the heavy nor the light positive mesons initiate stars. Most of the heavy positive mesons disintegrate to give observable secondary mesons, as shown in Figures 4, 5, and 6. Figure 4 is taken from an Eastman NTB plate, Figure 5 from an Ilford C.2, and Figure 6 from an Ilford C. 3. In each case the heavy positive meson enters from the bottom left. At the point at which the heavy positive meson stops a secondary meson is initiated, moving toward the right. It is thought that all, or almost all, of the heavy positive mesons give secondaries; but in some cases the secondaries move up or down at a steep angle through the emulsion and the tracks are not seen. The fraction of the heavy mesons which are observed to give secondaries depends on the thickness and sensitivity of the emulsion and on



Figure 4. Disintegration of a heavy positive meson to give a secondary. Photomicrograph made from Eastman NTB plate.

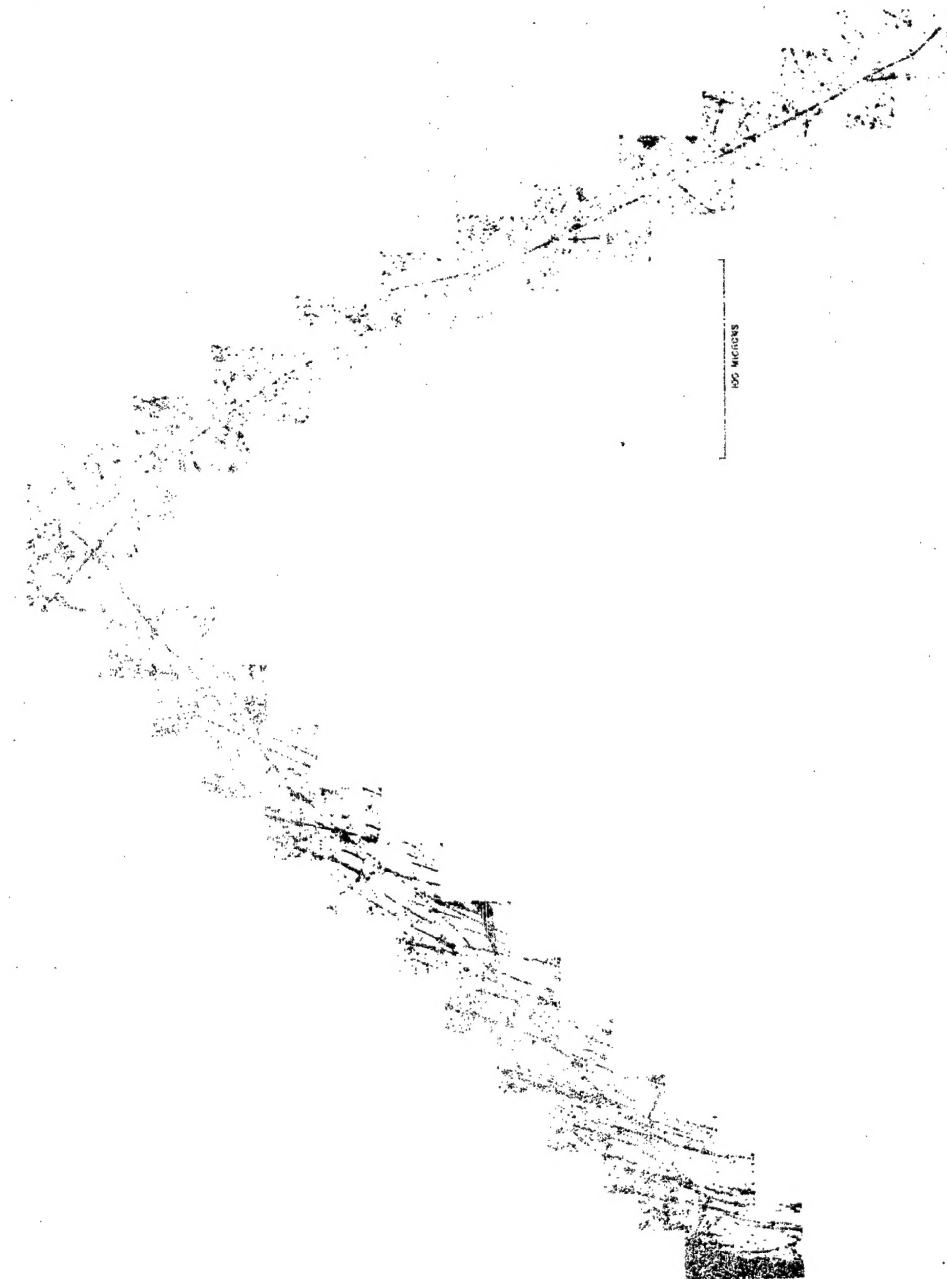


Figure 5. Disintegration of a heavy positive meson to give a secondary. Photomicrograph made from Ilford C.2 plate. The heavy tracks on the left hand side of the photomicrograph are due to protons from the target. They are often the most troublesome part of the background.



Figure 6. Disintegration of a heavy positive meson to give a secondary. Photomicrograph made from an Ilford C.3 plate.

the background of other tracks in the vicinity. Of the emulsions which we have used, the Ilford type C.3 seems to be best for showing secondaries.

For all of the secondary mesons which stop in the emulsion the range is about 600 microns, corresponding to an energy of about 4 Mev. The range distribution for five secondary meson tracks found in Ilford plates is shown in Figure 7.

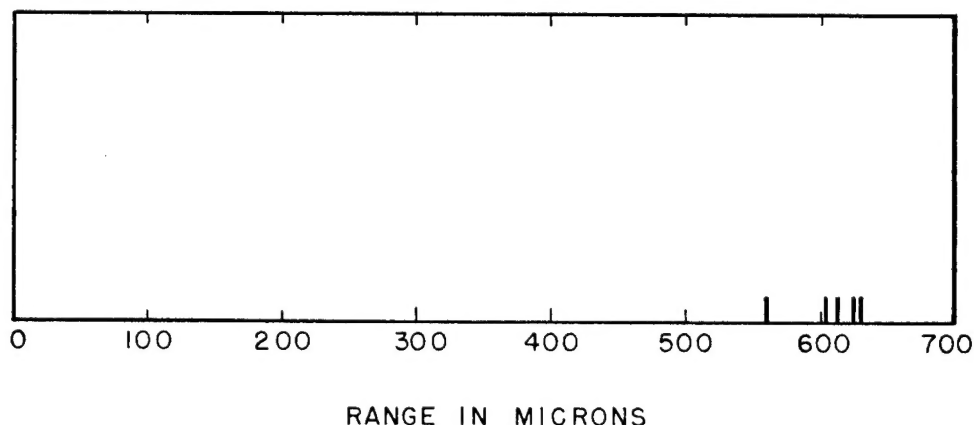


Figure 7. Range distribution of secondary mesons in Ilford plates.

In addition to the light meson tracks which start at the ends of heavy positive meson tracks, other tracks are found which have a grain density change characteristic of light mesons. It is assumed that they are positively charged and that they come from heavy mesons which disintegrate at positions other than in the emulsion. There are two groups: (1) Tracks with random orientation, found in all regions of the plate where heavy positive meson tracks are found. These mesons are presumed to arise from local disintegration of heavy positive mesons in the glass above or below the emulsion. For the disintegrations which are observed in the emulsion, the secondary mesons come off in random directions, so that some remain in the emulsion and some pass out of the emulsion into the glass. Similarly, it is to be expected that disintegrations above or below the emulsion would produce some secondaries which would enter the emulsion from the glass. (2) Tracks which start from the edge of the plate. These probably come from the target, or from some region not too far distant. The evidence for this is that if the masses are calculated by means of bending in the magnetic field and range in the emulsion on the assumption that the mesons come from the target, values are obtained which give an average of about 200 electron masses. The spread in mass values is rather large, suggesting that perhaps not all of the light meson trajectories originate at the target. If the energies of these mesons are calculated from their ranges, assuming a mass of 200 electron masses, almost all of the values found are less than 4 Mev. This suggests that most of them probably come from the decay of heavy mesons at rest, since 4 Mev is about the kinetic energy which a light meson receives from the disintegration of a heavy one.

The light mesons from the target may come from the decay of heavy ones which did not have enough energy to escape from the target. Another possibility is that a heavy meson goes through a 360° trajectory as illustrated in Figure 8, and then returns to the target, where it disintegrates into a light meson. It is probable that more light mesons arise from heavy mesons which decay without leaving the target than from those which return, because many of the 360° trajectories spiral up or down enough to miss the target.

Some of the light mesons may not come directly from the target but may come from heavy mesons which disintegrate in flight. Another possibility for a light meson trajectory which does not start at the target is illustrated in Figure 9. Here a heavy meson from the target comes to rest in the copper of the plate holder in a position such that the secondary meson can reach the photographic plate.

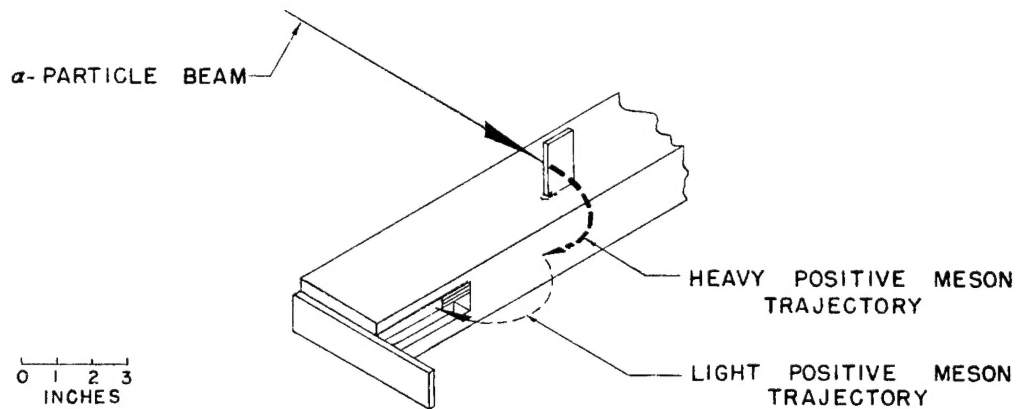


Figure 8. Diagram showing a possible method of production of light mesons in the target. Heavy meson goes through 360° trajectory and returns to the target, where it disintegrates to give a light meson.

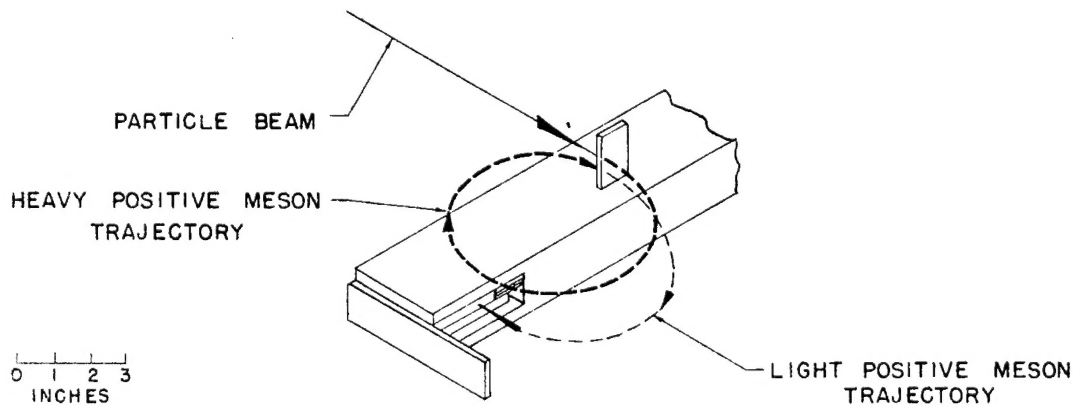


Figure 9. Diagram showing how a light meson trajectory could start at a point not at the target. Heavy meson from the target comes to rest in the copper of the plate holder in a position such that the secondary meson can reach the photographic plate.

A rather hasty survey indicates that the numbers of light mesons found in various positions on the plate are about what could be expected from the decay of the heavy ones as suggested above. The relative numbers of light and heavy mesons may be illustrated by one group of mesons found in 100 micron Ilford C.3 plates. Of the 34 mesons in the group, 20 entered from the edge of the emulsion and 14 en-

tered from the glass above or below the emulsion. For the 20 mesons which entered from the edge of the emulsion a measurement of bending in the magnetic field and range in emulsion showed that 16 had masses measured as greater than 260 electron masses. The remaining 4 had masses measured between 150 and 230 electron masses. All of the 16 heavy mesons gave observable secondaries. It is assumed that the 14 which entered the emulsion from the glass were light mesons which came from decay of heavy mesons in the glass above or below the emulsion.

Since the magnetic field of the cyclotron separates the positive mesons from the negative ones, we can be reasonably sure that disintegrations of the type shown in Figs. 4, 5, and 6 are due to positive mesons. No disintegrations of this type were found in a study⁴ of negative mesons produced by the cyclotron. In this study of negative mesons, light meson tracks were found, but none of them started at the point at which a heavy negative meson track ended. This substantiates the assumption of Lattes, Occhialini and Powell³ that positive mesons are responsible for the events in which a heavy meson comes to rest in the emulsion and then disintegrates to give a secondary meson.

RELATIVE NUMBERS OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE MESONS

By means of symmetrically placed plates as shown in Fig. 2, we plan to measure the relative numbers of positive and negative mesons produced in targets of various materials. So far only carbon has been studied and the study has included only a limited range of meson energies. The target was the usual 1/16 inch carbon. The energy range studied was roughly 2 to 3 Mev in the laboratory system. In this energy range 40 positive mesons have been counted as compared with 136 negative ones in an equivalent area. Of the 40 positive mesons, 26 are known to be heavy since they form observable secondaries. Some of the secondaries may have been missed, so that the number of heavy mesons may be larger than 26. It is estimated that more than 90 per cent of the 136 negative mesons are heavy.

Operation with the arrangement illustrated in Figure 3 has shown that there are some heavy positive mesons which leave the target in a direction opposite to beam direction. In order to illustrate the relative numbers of positive mesons in the backward beam direction and negative mesons in the forward direction, the numbers will be given for one run made with a 1/16 inch carbon target. For this run, mesons were counted along the full 3-inch edge of the plate, so that the energy range is of the order of 2 to 5 Mev in the laboratory system. One hundred and forty four negative mesons were counted along one edge of the plate and 16 positives along the opposite edge. The numbers given include both light and heavy mesons.

CONCLUSIONS

Positive mesons of mass of about 300 electron masses are produced when a beam of 380 Mev alpha-particles strikes a carbon target. At points in the emulsion at which these heavy positive mesons come to rest, tracks of secondary mesons of mass of about 200 electron masses are ordinarily observed. The fraction of the heavy positive meson tracks for which secondaries are observed depends on the sensitivity and thickness of the emulsion; however, it is thought that all, or almost all, of the heavy positive mesons decay to give secondaries. All of the secondaries have a range which corresponds to a kinetic energy of about 4 Mev. Light meson tracks are observed which do not start at the ends of heavy meson tracks. These are attributed to light mesons which come from the decay of heavy positive mesons at positions other than in the emulsion. It is thought that all of the light positive mesons observed come from the decay of heavy positive mesons.

Preliminary results indicate that for a 1/16 inch carbon target there are about one fourth as many heavy positive mesons as heavy negative mesons for meson energies of 2 to 3 Mev in the laboratory system. This is not inconsistent with the ratio expected on the basis of coulomb interaction. A calculation by Serber⁵ gives the ratio of heavy positive to heavy negative mesons in this energy range as about 1 to 3.5.

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